



NEWS RELEASE

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SBA TO HONOR 'BEST OF THE BEST' WITH ANNUAL CONTRACTING AWARDS

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) will present the agency's most prestigious annual contracting awards next week to a pair of small businesses, one involved with national security projects and the other with space initiatives like the Hubble Space Telescope. Also receiving awards will be three large prime contractors that rely heavily on smaller firms as suppliers or subcontractors.

"The federal contracting arena can be demanding," said SBA Administrator Aida Alvarez. "Only the best of the best are selected to receive the SBA's annual procurement awards. Among our winners are the large firms that maintain a healthy involvement with small businesses. But look carefully at our small business winners. They represent that special group of world-class entrepreneur who will lead this nation proudly into the 21st century. We salute them."

The *National Small Business Prime Contractor of the Year Award* will be given to Dr. Miguel Rios, Jr., chief executive officer of **ORION International Technologies** of Albuquerque, NM. The company is a former participant in the SBA's 8(a) Business Development Program and now supplies high technology engineering services to federal agencies, several with a focus on national security projects.

In nominating ORION for this award, the staff at the Air Force Research Laboratory – Phillips Site at the Kirtland Air Force Base said, "From its inception (in 1984), technical excellence has been the hallmark of the company... Its technical orientation and excellence led to government contracts in nuclear energy systems, high energy lasers, directed energy, pulse power and orbital mechanics." It was also noted that Dr. Rios received the '1998 *Hispanic Engineer National Achievement Award for Excellence in Industry*.' The firm employs more than 100 individuals.

The *National Small Business Subcontractor of the Year Award* will go to Mr. James P. Gormican, president of **Composite Optics, Inc.**, of San Diego, Calif. The company produces precision optics for the space and aerospace markets and has been involved with such high-profile projects as the Hubble Space Telescope, Mars Global Surveyor and the International Space Station.

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Composite, nominated by Lockheed Martin Missiles & Space of Sunnyvale, Calif., is described as a company “where the culture of community, commitment and creativity is as important as the balance sheet...The reliability of [its] products and services programs in an operating environment cannot be overemphasized, and has resulted in an unblemished record for flight success over the past 22 years.” The 450 employees help guide the company’s development through an Employee Stock Ownership Plan.

The *Dwight D. Eisenhower Award for Excellence*, created in 1991, is presented each year to large businesses that operate as federal prime contractors. The award recognizes those that have excelled in their utilization of small businesses as suppliers and subcontractors.

The SBA’s pool of eligible prime contractors numbers around 2,500. To qualify for an Eisenhower Award, however, a nominee must first be reviewed by local SBA officials and be a recipient of the agency’s Award of Distinction. There’s additional scrutiny with a site visit and judging at a national level. The Eisenhower Award winners are chosen from this select group, which generally numbers around 40.

The Eisenhower Award for 1999 will be given to **Bell Helicopter Textron, Inc.**, of Fort Worth, Texas (manufacturing category), **Computer Sciences Corp.**, of Falls Church, Va. (services category), and **Princeton University Plasma Physics Laboratory**, of Princeton, NJ (research and development category).

In fiscal year 1998, Bell Helicopter subcontracted nearly \$280 million, with small businesses receiving just over \$128 million. In this same period, Computer Sciences, an information technology company, subcontracted \$104 million, with \$35 million going to small businesses. The Princeton facility, a fusion lab dedicated to energy research, subcontracted nearly \$8.6 million in Fiscal Year 1998 and provided smaller firms with almost \$5.6 million of that total. In all cases, women-owned and small disadvantaged businesses shared in those small business subcontracts.

The awards will be presented in Washington, DC during the 32nd Annual Joint Industry/SBA Procurement Conference and Business Opportunity Expo. The event will be held June 8 to 10, with most events planned for either the Grand Hyatt Washington Hotel or the Washington, DC, Convention Center. Additional details on the event and the awards are available at <http://www.sba.gov/gc/expo.htm>.